

Small Group Discussion Guide: Jesus the High Priest

Opening Prayer & Ice Breaker

Ice Breaker Question: Have you ever had a moment where something you'd heard many times before suddenly clicked in a new way? What was that experience like?

Sermon Summary

This sermon explores Jesus as our High Priest by examining the Old Testament Levitical priesthood system, its limitations due to human sinfulness, and how Jesus perfectly fulfills the role of eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek—not according to the Levitical law, but according to the power of an endless life.

Key Scripture References

- **1 Samuel 2:12-36** - The corruption of Eli's sons and God's promise of a faithful priest
 - **Hebrews 4:12-16** - Jesus as our compassionate High Priest
 - **Hebrews 7:11-28** - Jesus as priest in the order of Melchizedek
 - **Hebrews 8:1-6** - Jesus ministers in the true tabernacle
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Context

1. **Before hearing this sermon, how much did you know about the Levitical priesthood?** How does understanding this system help you appreciate what Jesus did for us?
2. **The speaker mentioned feeling nothing while taking communion.** Have you ever experienced spiritual numbness during a meaningful moment? What might cause this, and how can we address it?

The Problem of Sin

3. **Read 1 Samuel 2:12-25.** What were the specific sins of Eli's sons? How did their corruption affect the people's relationship with God?
4. **Why was Eli's passive response to his sons' behavior problematic?** What does this teach us about leadership and accountability in the church today?
5. **The Israelites had no recourse when priests were corrupt.** How does this highlight the vulnerability of a system dependent on sinful humans?

Jesus as the Solution

6. **Read Hebrews 4:14-16.** How does Jesus being fully human AND sinless make Him the perfect High Priest? Why are both qualities essential?
7. **The sermon explains that Jesus is a priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" rather than the Levitical order.** Why was this distinction so important for first-century Jewish believers? What does it mean for us today?
8. **Hebrews 7:25 says Jesus "always lives to intercede" for us.** What comfort does this ongoing intercession provide? How is this different from the one-time sacrifices of the Old Testament?

Personal Application

9. **The speaker said, "I want to know HOW Jesus died for my sins, not just THAT He did."** Do you tend to be more detail-oriented or big-picture in your faith? How can understanding the "how" deepen your appreciation?
10. **Read Hebrews 8:1-6.** Because of Jesus, we have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit living in us. How should this reality change our daily lives?
11. **The sermon emphasizes that we don't deserve this gift, yet God gave it anyway.** How does recognizing this undeserved grace impact your:
 - Worship?
 - Service to others?
 - Approach to sin and forgiveness?

Key Takeaways

1. **The Levitical priesthood was God's design, but it was limited by human sinfulness** - priests themselves needed forgiveness and could become corrupt.

2. **Jesus fulfills the prophecy of an eternal, faithful priest** who serves not according to the law of fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.
 3. **Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses** because He was tempted in every way, yet remained sinless - making Him both relatable and perfect.
 4. **We have direct access to God** through Jesus' continual intercession and the indwelling Holy Spirit - something Old Testament believers could never experience.
 5. **This gift is undeserved** - God's plan throughout all of history was to restore direct relationship with us, despite our sin.
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to deepen your appreciation for Jesus as your High Priest:

Option 1: Study Deeper

- Read through the entire book of Hebrews this week
- Journal about new insights into Jesus' role as High Priest
- Research Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20, Psalm 110:4)

Option 2: Worship Intentionally

- Before taking communion next time, spend 10 minutes reflecting on what Jesus' sacrifice specifically means for you
- Write a prayer of thanksgiving for Jesus' ongoing intercession
- Share your appreciation with someone else

Option 3: Live It Out

- Identify one ministry or calling you've been avoiding and take one step toward it this week
- Have a conversation with someone about what Jesus has done for you
- Practice approaching God directly throughout each day, remembering you have access because of Jesus

Option 4: Reflect on Access

- Spend time each day this week thanking God that you can approach Him directly
 - Consider what it would have been like to live under the Levitical system
 - Journal about how having the Holy Spirit living in you changes everything
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Closing Reflection

The speaker said: "If we have this gift that's this big, this grand, this deserving of appreciation, even if we can never appreciate it fully, why shouldn't we do anything we can to appreciate it as much as possible?"

Final Question: What is one specific way you will grow in your appreciation of Jesus as your High Priest this week?

Closing Prayer

Pray together, thanking Jesus for being our eternal High Priest who continually intercedes for us. Ask the Holy Spirit to help each person appreciate this gift more deeply and live in light of the direct access we have to God.

For Further Study

- Read the entire book of Hebrews
- Study the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) to understand what Jesus accomplished
- Explore other "shadows" in the Old Testament that point to Jesus
- Read about the tearing of the temple veil (Matthew 27:51) and its significance

5-Day Devotional: Jesus Our Perfect High Priest

Day 1: The Problem of Human Mediators

Reading: 1 Samuel 2:12-25

Devotional:

Eli's sons show us the devastating reality of corrupt spiritual leadership. They turned God's holy sacrifices into opportunities for personal gain, leaving worshipers uncertain of their forgiveness. This passage reveals why human mediators will always fall short—we are all tainted by sin. The Israelites couldn't simply find new priests; they were trapped in a system dependent on fallible humans. Consider how this mirrors our own inability to save ourselves. We cannot be our own mediators before God. Today, reflect on areas where you've tried to earn God's favor through your own efforts. Recognize your need for a perfect mediator—one who never fails, never takes advantage, and always intercedes faithfully on your behalf.

Day 2: God's Promise of a Better Priest

Reading: 1 Samuel 2:35; Hebrews 4:14-16

Devotional:

In the midst of priestly corruption, God makes an extraordinary promise: "I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind." This wasn't about another Levite—it pointed to someone entirely different. Jesus fulfills this ancient prophecy as our compassionate High Priest who understands our weaknesses yet remains without sin. Unlike Eli's sons, Jesus never exploits His position. He sympathizes with our struggles because He experienced temptation, betrayal, and suffering. Yet He never sinned, making Him the perfect mediator. Today, approach God's throne with confidence. Whatever you're facing, Jesus understands and intercedes for you faithfully. Bring your struggles directly to Him.

Day 3: A Priest Forever

Reading: Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:11-17

Devotional:

Melchizedek appears mysteriously in Genesis—a priest-king who blessed Abraham and received tithes from him. His priesthood wasn't based on Levitical law but on something eternal. Jesus, like Melchizedek, serves as priest "according to the power of an endless life." The Levitical priests died and needed replacements; their sacrifices were repeated endlessly because sin persisted. But Jesus lives forever, offering one perfect sacrifice that covers all sins for all time. His priesthood never ends, never fails, never requires renewal. Consider what this means: Jesus is interceding for you right now and will continue forever. Your forgiveness isn't dependent on repeated rituals or imperfect humans. It rests on His eternal, unchanging priesthood. Rest in that security today.

Day 4: Freedom from the Old System

Reading: Hebrews 8:1-6

Devotional:

The Israelites worshiped at a physical temple because God couldn't dwell among sinful people. Their relationship with God was filtered through priests, sacrifices, and ceremonial laws—a constant reminder of separation. But Jesus changed everything. He ministers in the true heavenly sanctuary, making it possible for God's Spirit to dwell within believers. The temple veil tore when Jesus died, symbolizing direct access to God. No more intermediaries. No more distance. The Holy Spirit lives in you because Jesus continually atones for your sins. This wasn't just a slight improvement—it was a revolutionary transformation. Today, recognize the profound gift of God's presence within you. You don't worship at a distant temple; God Himself dwells in your heart.

Day 5: A Gift We Don't Deserve

Reading: Genesis 3:14-15; Ephesians 2:4-9

Devotional:

From the moment sin entered the world, God planned our rescue. He promised that Eve's offspring would crush the serpent's head. Through Abraham, He promised blessing for all nations. Throughout Israel's history, He pointed toward Jesus—the perfect High Priest who would finally solve the sin problem. We didn't deserve this. Humanity rebelled in the garden, choosing independence over intimacy with God. He could have ended it there. Instead, His overwhelming love drove Him to orchestrate the most elaborate rescue plan in history, culminating in Jesus' sacrifice. This wasn't earned; it's pure grace. Today, let this truth sink deep: you have been given an undeserved gift of immeasurable value. How will you respond? What can you do today to appreciate and honor this gift more fully?